

LETTER XXIX

KOCHANES, *Oct.*
87.

AFTER two days the Patriarch arrived from Gahgorap/ with nearly forty persons. To realise what this houf is like, one must go back four centuries, to the mode of living of the medieval barons of England. Mar Shimun is not only a spiritual prince, but the temporal ruler of the Syrians of the plains and valleys, and of the Ashirets or tribal Syrians of the mountains of Central Kurdistan, as well as a judge and a salaried official of the Turkish Government. He appoints the *maleks* or lay rulers of each district, where the office is not hereditary, and possesses ecclesiastical patronage. For over four centuries the Patriarch has been of the family of Shimun, which is regarded as the royal family; and he is assisted in managing affairs by a "family council." Eochanes is thus the ecclesiastical and political metropolis of the Syrian nation, and the innumerable disputes which arise among the people of this region are brought here for judgment and arbitration.

It is a crowded life. From sunrise to sunset the pavement outside the rude hall of entrance, the great room, like that at Marbishu, where Sulti presides, and the guest-chambers, are always thronged with men wait-

ing to be received by the Patriarch,
sleeping on the
big settle in the hall, or cleaning swords and
guns, or
wrestling, performing feats of horsemanship,
playing chess,